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LEBANON/CIVIL
CONFLICT

JENNINGS: Good evening. Forty-eight hours ago the president issued a statement which a vast majority of the country took to mean that U.S. Marines would be pulled out of Beirut. The country may have jumped to the wrong conclusion. Only today has the White House got around to correcting that impression, that some Marines may be there for a long time. In a moment we'll try to figure out what's going on. For the last 48 hours, the U.S. Navy has been shelling the mountains above Beirut. Our Pentagon correspondent John McWethy reports that one person who may have been killed was Syria's commanding general in Lebanon.

MCWETHY: In yesterday's massive naval barrage from the battleship New Jersey, U.S. intelligence sources tell ABC News that American firepower killed not only the commanding general of all Syrian forces in Lebanon, but also a large part of his general staff. The command bunkers where they were located were near the town of Hammana some 15 miles east of Beirut. In addition, sources in the U.S., Israel, and Lebanon claimed the shelling destroyed the Syrian communications and planning nerve center that coordinates all movement of Syrian forces in Lebanon. According to the military sources, after the U.S. was stunned by the terrorist bombing that killed 241 American servicemen at the Beirut Airport in October, the intelligence community went to work locating and detailing every key Syrian military installation in the region. As a result, when the New Jersey opened fire yesterday, Pentagon sources say its gunners knew exactly what targets to go after. Military sources say 30 shells were laid on the key Syrian command bunker, each shell weighing about 2,000 pounds and capable of clearing an area half the size of a football field. American intelligence analysts stress that the destruction of these kinds of Syrian targets was no accident. John McWethy, ABC News, the Pentagon.